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E.O. 12356: OADR  
 TAGS: PREL, XK, AS  
 SUBJECT: GOA CRITICIZES AID FOR CONTRAS

1. (U) THIS MESSAGE REQUEST ACTION.

2. (U) DFA SENT US ON MARCH 14 A COPY OF A MARCH 12  
 PARLIAMENTARY STATEMENT BY GOVERNMENT FOREIGN AFFAIRS  
 SPOKESMAN GARETH EVANS CRITICIZING ADMINISTRATION EFFORTS  
 TO PROVIDE AID TO THE CONTRAS. EVANS' STATEMENT CAME  
 IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION BY LEFT-WING LABOR PARTY  
 SENATOR BOLKUS.

3. (U) FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF QUESTION AND RESPONSE:

SENATOR BOLKUS: I DRAW THE ATTENTION OF THE MINISTER  
 REPRESENTING THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS TO  
 PRESIDENT REAGAN'S CURRENT EFFORTS TO RAISE CONGRESSIONAL  
 SUPPORT FOR USDOLS 100 MILLION IN MOSTLY MILITARY AID  
 FOR THE CONTRA REBELS IN NICARAGUA. IN VIEW OF THE  
 SANDANISTA GOVERNMENT'S WIDELY APPROVED HUMAN RIGHTS  
 RECORD, ESPECIALLY IN THE AREAS OF HEALTH, EDUCATION  
 AND THE GENERAL AREA OF HUMAN RIGHTS, AS WELL AS ITS  
 POLICY OF A COMMITMENT TO A MIXED ECONOMY AND IN  
 VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THE SO-CALLED FREEDOM FIGHTERS  
 HAVE A RECORD OF BEING NOTHING MORE THAN DISORGANIZED,  
 COLD-BLOODED BUTCHERS, I ASK: WHAT ACTION IS THE  
 AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TAKING TO EXPRESS ITS OBJECTIONS  
 TO ANY FURTHER INTRUSION BY THE US ADMINISTRATION  
 IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS SMALL LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY?

SENATOR EVANS: THE PRESIDENT AND SENIOR MEMBERS OF  
 THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION HAVE  
 RECENTLY MADE STATEMENTS UNDERLINING THEIR DETERMINATION  
 TO SEE THE SANDANISTA GOVERNMENT REPLACED BY SUPPORTING  
 THE CONTRAS WHO ARE ENGAGED IN DOMESTIC INSURGENCY,  
 MOSTLY FROM SAFE HAVENS IN NEIGHBORING HONDURAS.  
 MOREOVER, THE UNITED STATES SECRETARY OF STATE,  
 MR GEORGE SHULTZ, HAS HINTED AT THE USE OF UNITED  
 STATES MARINES. THESE STATEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE IN

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THE CONTEXT, AS SENATOR BOLKUS SAID, OF SEEKING SUPPORT FOR A REQUEST TO THE US CONGRESS FOR APPROVAL TO SPEND USDOLS 100 MILLION ON CIVIL AND MILITARY AID TO THE CONTRAS OVER THE NEXT 18 MONTHS, SUCCEEDING THE USDOLS 27 MILLION LIMITED TO NON-LETHAL AID WHICH WAS APPROVED FOR THE 12 MONTHS ENDING ON 31 MARCH. SO FAR IT IS THE CASE THAT CONGRESSIONAL CONSIDERATION OF THE REQUEST HAS NOT BEEN TOTALLY SYMPATHETIC TO THE ADMINISTRATION.

AUSTRALIA HAS BEEN VERY CLOSELY WATCHING DEVELOPMENTS IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT MILITARY ACTION WILL NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF THE REGION. THE SUPPLY OF MILITARY AID TO THE CONTRAS, IN ADDITION TO THE NON-LETHAL AID THEY ALREADY RECEIVE, CAN IN OUR VIEW ONLY INCREASE TENSION THERE AND ADD AN UNWELCOME COMPLICATION TO THE DIFFICULT TASK OF THE CONTADORA COUNTRIES AND THEIR SUPPORTERS IN WORKING TOWARDS A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION OF CONFLICTS IN THE ON THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, IT HAS TO BE SAID THAT THE RECORD OF THE CONTRAS IS ATROCIOUS AND DOES NOT GIVE CAUSE FOR CONFIDENCE IN THEIR DEMOCRATIC CREDENTIALS. MR HAYDEN HAS PREVIOUSLY EXPRESSED SOME DISAPPOINTMENT OVER THE SANDINISTAS' DISRESPECT FOR THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THEIR POLITICAL OPPONENTS IN NICARAGUA AND THAT ALSO HAS TO BE TAKEN INTO THE BALANCE IN ANY JUDGEMENT ABOUT THIS AREA. AS TO THE LAST PART OF THE QUESTION, AS IN THE PAST, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE KNOWN TO THE UNITED STATES ITS CONCERNS ON CENTRAL AMERICAN ISSUES WHERE APPROPRIATE.

4. (C) ACTING POLCOUNS MET WITH DFA AMERICAS BRANCH ASSISTANT SECRETARY COLIN MCDONALD SHORTLY AFTER RECEIPT OF THE TEXT TO REGISTER OUR CONCERN OVER ITS CONTENTS, ESPECIALLY THE FIRST TWO SENTENCES OF EVANS' REMARKS. ACTING POLCOUNS NOTED THAT THESE COMMENTS REPRESENTED A MAJOR DISTORTION OF OUR POLICIES AND INTENTIONS TOWARD NICARAGUA. HE POINTED OUT THAT U.S. POLICY, AS STATED BY SECRETARY SHULTZ IN HIS FEBRUARY 27 TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE, IS TO CONVINCE THE SANDINISTAS TO NEGOTIATE A POLITICAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS IN NICARAGUA, AND THAT OUR SUPPORT FOR THE CONTRAS WAS DESIGNED TO GIVE THE SANDANISTAS AN INCENTIVE TO NEGOTIATE SERIOUSLY. THUS, C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 CANBERRA 02471

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SANDANISTAS AN INCENTIVE TO NEGOTIATE SERIOUSLY. THUS, OUR POLICY WAS NOT AIMED AT "REPLACING" THE SANDANISTA GOVERNMENT, A GOVERNMENT WITH WHOM WE HAVE MAINTAINED DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS AND WITH WHOM WE HAVE OFFERED TO TALK IN THE CONTEXT OF SANDANISTA AGREEMENT TO ENGAGE IN SERIOUS DIALOGUE WITH THE OPPOSITION. ACTING POLCOUNS ALSO NOTED THAT FAR FROM "HINTING AT THE USE OF U.S. MARINES," THE SECRETARY HAD SPECIFICALLY RULED OUT THE USE OF FORCE BY THE UNITED STATES IN HIS TESTIMONY TO THE SENATE.

5. (C) SPEAKING PERSONALLY, MCDONALD ALLOWED THAT THE REMARKS ALLEDGING THAT THE SECRETARY HAD HELD OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF SENDING IN THE MARINES WERE INAPPROPRIATE, AND AFTER SOME DISCUSSION CONCEDED THAT CLAIMS THAT U.S. POLICY SOUGHT THE "REPLACEMENT" OF THE SANDINISTA GOVERNMENT WERE "OVER-SIMPLIFIED." HE MAINTAINED, HOWEVER, THAT THE POLITICAL RHETORIC OVER THE AID

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DEBATE IN CONGRESS HAD REACHED A POINT WHERE IT WAS CAUSING SERIOUS PUBLIC CONCERN THAT THE U.S. INDEED MIGHT TAKE DRASTIC ACTION AGAINST NICARAGUA IF OTHER MEANS FAIL TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM. HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE LABOR PARTY (ALP) LEFT WING WAS FIXATED ON NICARAGUA, AND WAS CONSTANTLY PUSHING THE GOA TO TAKE A STRONGER STANCE IN OPPOSING U.S. POLICY TOWARD THAT GOVERNMENT.

6. (C) DISCUSSING THE GENESIS OF THE STATEMENT, MCDONALD MAINTAINED THAT IT HAD BEEN PUT TOGETHER HURRIEDLY AND THAT AS A RESULT MISTAKES MIGHT HAVE BEEN MADE. HE DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT EVANS' COMMENTS HAD BEEN CLEARED AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL, ALTHOUGH HERE AGAIN THE TIME PRESSURES INHERENT IN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE MAY HAVE CAUSED IT TO RECEIVE LESS ATTENTION THAN NORMAL.

7. (C) COMMENT/REQUESTED ACTION: MCDONALD CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD THE CONCERN WHICH UNDERLAY OUR COMPLAINTS ON THE EVANS STATEMENT. WE NONETHELESS BELIEVE WE SHOULD BE INSTRUCTED TO REGISTER OUR DISPLEASURE AT A HIGHER LEVEL TO DRIVE HOME THE POINT. ALTHOUGH THE ALP/LEFT WING WILL CONTINUE TO SEE NICARAGUA THROUGH ROSE TINTED LENSES, A FIRM STATEMENT REFLECTING OUR CONCERN OVER THE PARTY LEADERSHIP'S WILLINGNESS TO GIVE IN TO THIS PRESSURE MAY MAKE THEM THINK TWICE IN THE FUTURE BEFORE RUSHING IN TO PRINT WITH EGREGIOUSLY DISTORTED DESCRIPTIONS OF U.S. POLICY. WE BELIEVE AN APPROACH AT THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-DCM LEVEL WOULD BE APPROPRIATE. END COMMENT. LANE  
END OF MESSAGE

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